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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 002596

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: LIMBO, LAWSUITS, AND LUMPINI PARK - HOW MUCH LONGER??

REF: A. BANGKOK 2567

[B. BANGKOK 2370](#)

Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. On May 2, The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) returned to Bangkok's Lumpini Park to hold another demonstration. The rally was peaceful but turnout was much smaller in comparison to previous PAD-led events. PAD leader Sondhi Limthongkul announced the return of his weekly political talk show which he plans to stage from various cities around the country in the coming weeks. For the past several weeks, the PAD has been reaching out to the provinces to spread its anti-Thaksin message. Meanwhile, a plethora of lawsuits have been filed against the core leadership of the PAD who all remain free on bail. End Summary

PAD GATHERS IN LUMPINI PARK

¶2. (U) Last night,s PAD rally attracted only a core group of the movement,s following. Estimates of crowd size vary from 4,000 - 5,000. As usual, the demonstration was spirited, but peaceful. Speakers warned that if Thaksin reverses his decision to "take a break from politics" (as some TRT members have hinted he might) the political crisis would worsen and PAD would have to return to the streets in force. PAD vowed to continue its efforts until the "Thaksin regime" is fully dismantled. At the same time, the PAD made it clear that it respects the wishes of the King to have the matter of April,s snap election resolved by the Thai court system.

¶3. (U) PAD-leader and media firebrand Sondhi Limthongkul announced the return of his weekly political talk show to be held every Saturday starting on May 20. The break between now and May 20 would presumably provide enough time for the courts to rule on the various key cases regarding the snap election (see Reftel A). Prior to the formation of the PAD, Sondhi,s staged his weekly anti-Thaksin talk show before a live audience at Lumpini Park to crowds ranging from 4,000 up to 30,000. The May 20 program will be held at Lumpini Park and broadcast live via Sondhi,s ASTV television channel. After that, Sondhi plans to take the show on the road, broadcasting from different cities around the country.

¶4. (U) For the past several weeks, the PAD leadership has been traveling the country in an attempt to promote its anti-Thaksin message in the provinces. Most of these visits have gone smoothly, with the exception of Udon Thani where PAD members were met by an angry crowd of rock throwing Thaksin supporters (see Reftel B). In addition to Udon Thani, the PAD has held gatherings recently in Nakhon Ratchasima, Trang, Phuket, and Nakon Sri Thammarat.

THERE OUGHTA BE A LAW...

¶5. (U) The list of lawsuits and countersuits continues to grow. On May 1, the Royal Thai Police (RTP) filed charges against the five core leaders of the PAD for a wide variety of offenses. The charges run the gamut from attempting to overthrow the democratic government and inciting unrest to violating traffic laws and illegal use of loudspeakers.

¶6. (U) Naturally, the five PAD leaders (Sondhi Limthongkul, Chamlong Srimuang, Somsak Kosaisuk, Somkiat Pongpaiboon and Pipop Thongchai) denied all of the charges insisting that they are politically motivated. The accused leaders went together to the RTP,s Crime Suppression Division in Bangkok to surrender themselves on May 1. They were all released after about two hours of questioning and were told to report again to the RTP on May 8.

¶7. (C) These latest charges come on top of the lese majeste charges filed against Sondhi Limthgnkul. Sondhi initially refused to adhere to two police summons related to the charge. Only after an arrest warrant was issued did he agree to turn himself in to police on April 28. He was released the same day on bail of roughly USD 7,500. (COMMENT: The charge of lese majeste, which essentially means insulting the King, is often used as a political tool to intimidate opponents and influence public opinion against the target of

the charge. Few of these cases ever actually reach court and even fewer actually result in a guilty verdict. End comment.)

18. (C) COMMENT: The temperature of the political crisis is decidedly cooler in the wake of the King's speech. Nevertheless, in the lingering limbo of awaiting court rulings drags on, it appears that the only thing the protagonists in this drama have to do is file more and more lawsuits against each other. So far, the Supreme Court alone has received a record number of cases (414 to date) of alleged electoral violations related to the April 2 election. While we doubt that any of the charges filed against the PAD leaders (or other key individuals involved in this crisis) will result in any serious punitive actions, we will continue to monitor developments closely. End Comment.

BOYCE